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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001224

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DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/17/2029
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: ANOTHER OPPOSITION POLITICIAN SEEKS ASYLUM IN PERU

REF: A. CARACAS 001120
[1](#)B. CARACAS 001119
[1](#)C. LIMA 000589
[1](#)D. CARACAS 000309
[1](#)E. CARACAS 000750
[1](#)F. CARACAS 001188

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Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBIN D. MEYER,
FOR REASON 1.4(D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Local papers report that Oscar Perez, a close ally of opposition Mayor of Greater Caracas Antonio Ledezma, presented his petition to the Peruvian Government September 17 for political asylum. Perez has been in hiding for nearly three weeks after an arrest warrant was issued for his involvement in the August 22 opposition march against the Education Law (reftel A). Perez would be the sixth prominent member of the opposition to have fled to Peru seeking asylum in the last two years (reftels B, C, D, E). His apparently selective prosecution may serve several purposes -- to intimidate potential opposition protesters and to send a strong message to Ledezma, who is facing a variety of allegations from Chavista government officials. End Summary.

PEREZ IN PERU

[1](#)2. (SBU) Local press reported that Perez, who is the president of Ledezma's ABP party, formally submitted his petition September 17 for political asylum to Peru's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He claimed to be politically persecuted by the Chavez administration and "the representatives of the rest of Venezuela's Public Powers," specifically Attorney General Luisa Ortega Diaz. Perez has been in hiding since an arrest warrant was issued August 27 by a Caracas judge. He will be joining several other opposition leaders who have sought asylum in Peru, including "Un Nuevo Tiempo" leader and former Mayor of Maracaibo Manuel Rosales, union leader Carlos Ortega, student leader Nixon Moreno, and former Governors of Aragua and Yaracuy States Didalco Bolivar and Eduardo Lapi.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The warrant followed Perez's involvement in the August 22 opposition march in Caracas against the newly passed Education Law and alleged that he was responsible for "instigating delinquency." Perez received considerable media attention for spearheading a formal protest August 23 -- the day after the march -- arguing that the metropolitan police and National Guard had responded "disproportionately" by tear-gassing the opposition marchers. On August 31, investigative police (CICPC) searched Perez's home in Caracas and arrested one of his security guards for allegedly

carrying an illegal firearm. Perez's daughter, Osmary, subsequently told the media during a press conference that the CICPC agents had only presented an arrest warrant for her father, which did not give them the authority to search the home.

LEDEZMA STILL A TARGET

¶4. (SBU) Chavista National Assembly Deputy Juan Carlos Dugarte called September 17 for Ledezma's removal from his position as the Mayor of Greater Caracas, allegedly for violating the constitution. Dugarte claimed that Ledezma has acted as a "political operator of imperialism" with the goal of using the media to destabilize the central government. He also accused the Mayor of diverting funds from the Mayor's Office that should have gone to its workers. On September 9, the Ministry of Labor asked the Attorney General's office to investigate Ledezma for "administrative rebellion." Ledezma claimed that the charge was for a failure to pay the Ministry a 10 million BsF (about USD 5 million on the official rate) fine that had been imposed on his office for failing to rehire workers who had sued for being laid off. Ledezma responded that following the passage of new legislation that decimated the metropolitan budget (reftel F), he simply had no money for either paying fines or rehiring employees.

¶5. (C) Comment: The charges against Perez appear unfounded given that his real "crime" seems to have been delivering a letter to the Attorney General's office denouncing the police response during the August 22 protest, rather than the march itself. With over a dozen protest participants currently in jail on dubious charges, however, Perez probably decided to flee rather than risk prosecution by the partisan judiciary.

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End Comment.
DUDDY